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# Economic Intelligence Weekly

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Note: Comments and queries regarding this publication are welcomed.

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#### ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY

#### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Prospects for the 1974 world wheat crop have dimmed, according to latest estimates by USDA and the International Wheat Council. The USDA estimate is now 369 million tons, compared with an earlier estimate of 375 million tons. Lower production will restrict the rebuilding of stocks and will strengthen prices. A look at the crop prospects in Eastern Europe is included in this issue.

Gold soared \$8.50 an ounce Monday to a six-week high of \$157.50 as uncertainty about the US political scene pervaded the market. Exchange markets were calm, however, and the dollar moved upward with the release of better-than-expected US trade figures for June.

#### In the European Community:

- Britain's labor government has opted for a mildly reflationary fiscal
  policy to counter rising unemployment and sluggish growth. New
  cuts in VAT rates and other measures will stimulate domestic
  spending and give some immediate cosmetic improvement in the
  price statistics.
- Italy's balance of-payments deficit dropped to \$583 million in June, the lowest monthly deficit so far this year. Rome is still seeking financing to cover its deficit for the remainder of the year. Some relief may be forthcoming from the Shah of Iran, who is considering a loan similar to those extended to the United Kingdom and France. Italy's austerity program is still under fire by the major trade unions.
- France's real GNP growth in the first half of 1974 was probably about 5% at an annual rate; the most recent OECD forecast for the same period was 4.5%. The foreign sector provided a key stimulus, with the volume of exports up at an annual rate of 29% and imports up only 18%.
- West Germany recorded its smallest trade surplus (\$1.5 billion) of the year in June, primarily as a result of a decline in export volume.

Japan's economy remains in the doldrums. Industrial production dropped 2.5% in June, and inventories continued to mount. The new finance minister faces strong pressure to relax Tokyo's tough anti-inflation program.

Copper, lead, and zinc prices moved up over the past week. Copper prices on the LME rose 10 cents a pound after dropping to 82.8 cents a pound early last week on news of the Kennecott strike settlement. Both US and world copper stocks are above last year's levels, and, barring unexpected lengthy negotiations with the remaining US producers, no supply squeeze is currently anticipated. Zinc and lead rose 7 and 3 cents a pound, respectively.

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#### Articles

## EC SOYBEAN CAP: A STEP TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON US SUPPLIES

The EC has taken the first positive step toward reducing its near-total dependence on foreign sources for soybeans, 85% of which comes from the United States. Adoption of a Common Agricultural Policy for soybeans by the EC Agricultural Ministers at their July meeting culminates a discussion that gained impetus from the US ban on soybean exports a year ago.

Commitments under GATT prevent the EC from applying to soybeans the system of variable import levies used for other CAP-supported agricultural products. Instead, output will be encouraged by a direct subsidy. A support price will be set each year by the Agricultural Ministers, and, if the market price falls below this level, the EC Agricultural Fund will make up the difference by direct payments to farmers.

At any reasonably attractive support price, the area shifted to soybean cultivation almost surely will exceed the 250,000 acres – yielding 6-1/4 million bushels – predicted by French officials. In recent years, only 10,000 acres have been devoted to soybean growing in EC countries – mainly France and Italy.

EC Soybean and Corn Supplies, 1972

	Soy	beans	Com		
	Million Bushels	Percent of Total	Million Bushels	Percent of Total	
Total	209.7	100.0	899.0	100.0	
Domestic production	0.3	0.1	560.3	62.3	
Imports	209.4	99.9	338.7	37.7	
Of which:			550.7	31.1	
United States	178.3	85.0	220.4	24.5	
Brazil	27.4	13.1		24,3	
Argentina	****	****	89.1	9.9	

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Most of the 7 million acres currently sown to corn in southern France and northern Italy can be planted in soybeans. Based on experience in the United States, which has yields and costs similar to those in Europe, the breakeven point for shifting to soybean production is a soybean-corn price ratio of about 2.3:1. With the current EC support price for corn at \$2.82 per bushel, a support price of more than \$6.50 a bushel is needed to stimulate soybean production. The support price most widely discussed within EC circles is \$7.25.

Under a favorable support price, a large part of the 7 million acres will be shifted eventually to soybeans, either permanently or in rotation with corn. For each million acres shifted, the EC will obtain 25 million bushels of soybeans, one-eighth of its needs. Because of soybean's higher protein content, the shift will allow a substantial reduction – in some combination – of total soybean and corn imports. Whatever the combination, US farmers will be most affected because they typically provide 85% of soybean imports and 65% of corn imports by the EC. The two commodities together accounted for more than \$2 billion of US exports last year.

While the EC countries may not be ready to push for self-sufficiency in high-protein feedstuffs at this time, they clearly desire to reduce their heavy dependence on US supplies. EC Agriculture Commissioner Lardinois has stated that, if the US reimposed soybean export controls, the Community would put into effect a plan to achieve protein self-sufficiency in 10 years.

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#### USSR: ECONOMY KEEPS ROLLING

Moscow's midyear economic report contained mainly good news for the population and the delegates gathering for the meetings of the Supreme Soviet. Based on the results so far, Soviet GNP should increase by about 5-1/2% in 1974—the second straight year of above-average growth.

USSR: Percentage Rates of Economic Growth<sup>1</sup>

	1971	1972	1973	1974 <sup>2</sup>
Gross national product	4.5	2.1	7.3	5.6
Agriculture	-0.6	-9.1	16.5	7.3
Industry	5.9	5.0	6.2	6.5
Other	6.1	5.4	4.2	4.3

<sup>.</sup> CIA estimates.

#### Industry

Civilian industrial production grew by 6.5% in the first half of 1974, compared with the same period in 1973. Production of energy and machinery grew substantially faster than in the first half of 1973. In the consumer goods sector, textiles and leather footwear scarcely met the plan, but production of some highly prized

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<sup>2.</sup> Projected.

durables—automobiles, furniture, and vacuum cleaners—continued to grow rapidly. The food industry performed well, with meat production rising by 12% compared with the first half of 1973 and vegetable oil output up 50%.

#### Agriculture

The promise of a good year in agriculture accompanied the reports of strong industrial performance. At midyear the number of cattle was up 3%; hogs, 5%; and poultry, 7%. Abundant rainfall has brightened prospects for meeting the 1974 goal of 205.6 million tons of grain.

#### Foreign Trade

The 20% increase in total trade over the first half of last year results primarily from higher prices for Soviet oil and raw materials. For the year as a whole, exports to hard currency countries are likely to rise more than 50%, to \$7.5 billion; imports are expected to fall from \$6.6 billion to \$6.0 billion because of a reduction in imports of agricultural products.

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#### EASTERN EUROPE: HIGHER GRAIN IMPORTS IN PROSPECT

East European grain production is now projected at 72 million tons, slightly less than the 1973 crop. To meet food and feed requirements, Eastern Europe may have to import 9 million to 10 million tons of grain in FY75, compared with about 8 million tons in FY74.

During the past two months, heavy rains and cool temperatures have delayed the ripening of small grains in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. The wheat harvest is from one to three weeks late in most countries. Minor flood damage has been reported in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. If the weather does not improve in the coming weeks, yields of later harvested grains will fall even more. The delays in harvesting have already jeopardized plans for planting second crops — mostly corn for silage. In Bulgaria, some grain-producing areas are still suffering from drought, and premature ripening of wheat may have reduced yields.

The northern countries - Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Poland - probably will account for more than 90% of grain imports required in FY75. They would trim purchases, however, if prices of concentrated feeds such as oilcake

and meals are more attractive or if the increase in livestock berds is curbed. In the south -- normally a grain-exporting region -- Romania faces its second consecutive shortfall in production and will have to restrict exports in FY75. Romania has already received \$31 million in CCC credits for US grain in FY75. Bulgaria is likely to export only a small amount of wheat, if any. Hungary probably can satisfy both its domestic and normal export demands unless recent flooding is more extensive than admitted so far.

The Soviet Union is expected to export 4-1/2 million tons of grain to Eastern Europe in FY75, slightly more than in FY74. The remaining 4-1/2 million to 5-1/2 million tons would have to be purchased from major Western exporters — the United States, Canada, and the EC. The US share in FY74 was about 1-1/2 million tons out of a total of 3.8 million tons Eastern Europe imported from the West.

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#### SOVIETS SEEK US MACHINERY FOR TRACTOR PLANT

The USSR intends to rely on Western suppliers, especially the United States, for key production equipment for the new Cheboksary tractor plant. Recently stepped-up negotiations with several US firms involve potential equipment sales of more than \$150 million.

Construction of the Cheboksary Plant for Industrial Tractors, under way since 1972, accelerated during the past year. A large press-welding/assembly building is already under roof, and construction of the steel foundry is proceeding rapidly. Upon completion (scheduled for 1976) the plant will cover 1,800 acres and produce 5,000 or more heavy-duty tracklaying tractors annually, including engines. The Soviets are looking to the West for (1) high-productivity machinery for the plant's steel foundry and (2) completely automated lines for the production of engine and transmission components and for the assembly of tractor bodies and caterpillar tracks.

The Soviet-designed 330- and 500-horsepower tractors will be the largest ever built in the USSR. Even after a decade of development, prototypes continue to show serious design deficiencies; for example, the bulldozer blade assembly does not hold up under normal-load conditions. Soviet officials are concerned that the tractor designs may not be fully debugged by the time the plant is ready for production. They hope to get design assistance from US manufacturers, especially for the 500-hp model.

Heavy-duty industrial tractors of the type to be built at Cheboksary are badly needed in the USSR for mining and construction. The USSR produces only a few industrial tractors as large as 300-hp. Most Soviet-made tractors in industrial use

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are modified agricultural models, which are seriously underpowered for heavy industrial operations. As a result, the USSR has depended heavily on imported Western tractors for use in the extractive industries, land reclamation, and forestry. Since the beginning of 1970, US and Japanese firms have supplied several thousand heavy-duty tracklaying tractors, including pipelayers.

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### CHINA: THE LEADING COMMUNIST CUSTOMER FOR US PRODUCTS

US exports to China in the first half of 1974 reached almost \$520 million, 75% of last year's total exports of \$690 million. If the present pattern continues—as is expected—US exports for 1974 will

expected—US exports for 1974 will reach \$1 bilion. China should easily surpass the USSR as the leading Communist customer for US exports. In contrast, Chinese exports to the United States in the first half were only \$50 million.

US-China Trade First Half 1974

Million US \$

US US **Exports** Imports<sup>1</sup> Total 519.1 51.8 Cotton 158.7 Sovbeans 108.3 Corn 93.1 Aircraft and parts 64.2 Wheat 44.8 Scrap metal 11.8 Tallow 5.7 Tobacco 2.7 Other 29.8

Agricultural exports, which accounted for 80% of US sales in the first half, would have been even higher if China had not suspended imports of wheat infected with TCK smut. This problem has since been resolved, and shipments have resumed. The US trade surplus in 1974 will easily surpass the 1973 surplus of \$625 million.

Prospects for US-China trade in 1975 are less bright. Contracts for delivery of US agricultural commodities in 1975 are thus far well below the 1974

1. Commodity breakdown not available.

level. The Boeing company has completed delivery of ten 707s, and no additional purchases of US aircraft are under discussion. The only major contract still outstanding covers eight US ammonia plants worth \$200 million. Delivery of these plants will start late this year or early next year and will continue through 1978.

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#### AUSTRALIA: FOREIGN INVESTMENT DOWN SHARPLY

Canberra's toughening stand is substantially reducing new foreign investment. Inflows of direct investment last year totaled \$400 million, a 60% drop from 1972. Portfolio investment fell even more precipitously, from \$700 million to \$140 million.

Australia's Labor Party has steadily tightened controls on foreign investment since taking office in 1972. Major steps include:

- introduction of a strict screening process aimed at preventing foreign takeovers of Australian firms,
- requirement of a 25% interest-free deposit for the life of the loan on long-term foreign borrowing, and
- restrictions on development of energy resources by foreign-owned firms.

Canberra's policies, which have the objective of limiting foreign equity in new mineral projects to 50%, have caused a marked decline in foreign spending on resource development. Last year, new foreign investment in mining fell to only \$80 million, compared with \$430 million the previous year. Uncertainty over government policies is holding up several major projects, including two alumina projects, scheduled to cost \$600 million. Investment in iron ore and coal projects has slowed, and development of large uranium deposits has halted.

Continued discouragement of foreign investment in Australia's mining industry ultimately would have a major adverse impact on world mineral supplies. Since 1968, Australia has accounted for nearly half the increase in world iron ore and bauxite output. The country is also an important world supplier of lead, zinc, tin, and coal and has enough nickel and uranium reserves to become a major exporter.

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#### INDIAN GRAIN PROSPECTS: NO DISASTER YET

Lagging monsoon rains in India are likely to cause the major fall harvest to drop below last year's output.

The US Embassy tentatively forecasts production of fall grains at 63 million to 66 million tons on the assumption of average rainfall during the last 2-1/2 months of the monsoon season. Rainfall in June and the first half of July was below normal in more than half of the producing areas, with the rains arriving two weeks late in some locations.

	Million Tons
1970	69
1971	63
1972	57
1973	67

Grain imports of at least 4 million tons will be required during the next 12 months. New Delhi has asked the USSR for another grain loan. Moscow apparently has delayed any commitments until it can better assess its own situation.

1970-73	
Annual average	64
1974	
Estimated	63-66

Grain stocks and anticipated deliveries appear adequate to take India through the critical preharvest period, July through October. The government holds only a few hundred thousand tons less than at this time last year, and scheduled third-quarter grain imports—principally from the United States—total 1.5 million tons, compared with 300,000 tons during the same period last year.

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**Notes** 

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#### Indonesia to Buy Communist Fertilizer

The USSR and East European countries have recently agreed to supply Indonesia with 500,000 tons of urea, more than 70% of Indonesia's fertilizer import requirement for 1974/75. Prices will reportedly run \$345-\$350 per ton, and purchases will be paid for in cash. The balance of fertilizer imports will come primarily from Japan, which has been forced to curtail its fertilizer exports.

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#### Romania to Boost Nitrogen Fertilizer Exports

Bucharest has secured a \$60 million loan from the World Bank to help build a new fertilizer complex that should make Romania one of the world's major exporters of nitrogen fertilizer. The \$200 million project, scheduled for completion at Tecuci in 1978, includes a 420,000-ton-a-year urea plant, a 208,000-ton-a-year diammonium phosphate plant, and intermediate units for production of ammonia, sulfuric acid, and phosphoric acid. In 1972, Romania exported about 300,000 tons of nitrogen; by 1980, exports should reach one million tons.

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#### INTERNAL ECONOMIC INDICATORS

GNP*	Average Annual	WHOLESALE PRICES Andustrial Percent Change	Average Annual
Constant Market Prices	Growth Rate Since		Growth Rate Since
United States Japan West Germany France United Kingdom Italy Canada	Percent Change   Ch	United States   Jun 74   2.1   Japan   Jun 74   1.2   West Germany   May 74   1.2   France   May 74   2.1   United Kingdom   May 74   2.1   Italy   May 74   0.7   Canada   Apr 74   2.6	1970 Earher 3 Months 1970 8.8   21.9   35.4 11.2   35.3   11.2 7.1   14.4   16.6 13.2   37.0   37.7 10.9   24.5   35.8 14.5   43.0   35.6 11.1   23.0   34.6

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTI	0	Average Annual rowth Rate Since	CONSUMER		Gri	verage Annua owth Rate Sin	
1	Percent Change	1 Year 3 Month			ent Change Previous	1 Year	3 Months
United States Jun 74 Japan Jun 74 West Germany May74 France May 74 United Kingdom May74 Italy Apr 74 Canada May 74	Month 1970 3 0 4.6 4 -2.5 6.8 1.1 3.5 2.4 6.1 -1.1 2.2 2.2 5.7	1 Year   3 Month Earlier*   -0.1   2.4   -0.7   2.4   -1.1   0.2   22.4   13.7   8.6   2.5	United States Japan West Gormany France United Kingdom Italy Canada	Month M Jun 74 May 74 Jun 74 May 74	1.0   6.1   0.3   11.3   0.4   6.3   1.2   7.9   1.4   10.5   1.3   9.5   1.3   6.5	Earlier   11.1   23.1   6.9   13.5   16.0   16.6   11.4	Earlier 11.7 15.7 6.5 17.1 25.3 16.9 15.5

RETAIL SALES* Current Prices	Average Annual Growth Rate Since	MONEY SUPPLY*  Average Annual Growth Rate Since
United States Japan West Germany France United Kingdom Italy Canada	Columbia	United States   Jun 74   0.1   6.8   5.8   10.7

#### MONEY-MARKET RATES

<sup>&</sup>quot;Seasonally adjusted.
""Average for latest 3 months compared with average for previous 3 months.

Note: US data provided by US government agencies

<sup>31</sup> July 1974 Office of Economic Research/CIA

### **EXTERNAL ECONOMIC INDICATORS**

EΧ	p	0	R	T	S*	
1 1						

				Gilmulative	
	Latest				
				ı US Ş	Percent
	ſ	Villian US Ş	1974	1973	Change
United States	Jun 74	8,357	40,608	32,110	45.1
Japan	Jun 74	4,636	24,618	16,690	47.5
West Germany	Jun 74	8,577	43,043	29,813	44.4
France	Jun 74	4,091	22,251	16,918	31.5
United Kingdom	Jun 74	3,280	17,111	13,613	25.7
Italy	May74	2,183	11,015	7,508	46.7
Canada	May 74	2,802	12,812	10,077	26.9

#### **EXPORT PRICES**

US\$	Average Annual Growth Rate Since					
	Percent Change Latest from Pryvious Month Month 1978			1 Yuar	3 Month	
United States Japan	May 74 May 74	Month -0.2 2.2	1970 1 11.2 1 17.2	Earlier 28.1 35.9	13.2 30.2	
West Germany France	Apr 74	5.1	15.1	27.6	102.1	
United Kingdom	Jan 74 Mar 74	-5.9 7.2	11.1	18.9 19.4	-35.2 49.6	
Italy Canada	Jan 74 Mar 74	- 1.2 7.2	10.0 14.2	19.1 41.3	9.8 86.1	

#### IMPORTS\*

		Comutativo			
	Latest				
			Million US \$		Percent
		Million US \$	1974	1973	Change
United States	Jun 74	8,622	46,871	33,058	41.8
Japan	Jun 74	4,658	26,204	14,190	84.7
West Germany	Jun 74	5,041	30,714	23,330	31.7
France	Jun 74	4,173	24,031	16,303	47.4
United Kingdom	Jun 74	4,422	23,234	15,498	49.9
Italy	May74	2,868	14,454	8,517	69.7
Canada	i May 74	2,635	12,196	9,220	32.0

#### **EXPORT PRICES**

wational Currency				average Ann rowth Rate S	
	Pe Latest fr	1 Year	3 Months		
United Ctatus	Month	Month	1970	Earlier	Earlier
United States Japan	May 74   May 74	-0.2 2.6	11.2	26.1 42.8	13.2
West Germany	Apr 74	1.3	4.4	13.6	31.9
France	Jan 74	3.2	8.0	17.6	31.3
United Kingdom	Mar 74	4.2	11.8	26.4	44.5
Italy	Jan74	4.9	10.9	31.3	52.2
Canada	Mar 74 İ	6.6	11.9	37.8	66.8

#### TRADE BALANCE" f.o.b./f.o.b.

	Lates	Month	Cumulative (Million US S)		
United States Japan West Germany France United Kingdom Italy Canada	Jun 74 Jun 74 Jun 74 Jun 74 Jun 74 May74 May 74	Million US \$ -265 -21 1,536 -82 -1,141 -686 167	1974 -263 -1,588 12,329 -1,780 -6,123 -3,439 616	1973 -948 2,501 6,483 615 -1,885 -1,010 856	Change 685 -4,089 5,845 -2,395 -4,238 -2,429 -242

### IMPORT PRICES

National Currency			verage Ann owth Rate S	
United States Japan West Germany France United Kingdom Italy Canada	rcent Chan om Previou Month 1.3 2.5 - 0.8 14.9 6.4 10.8	ue .	1 Year Earlier 48.7 82.4 23.3 .33.0 60.9 95.5 33.8	3 Months Earlier 79.4 18.4 19.4 127.4 107.4 125.4 103.0

### BASIC BALANCE\*\* Current and Long-Term-Capital Transactions

	t Period	Cumuli	ative (Millio	Million US \$)	
United States * Japan West Germany France United Kingdom Italy Canada	74 I Jun 74 Apr 74 73 IV 73 IV 73 II 74 I	Million US \$   2,065    -1,190     860     -431     -1,394     -336     -195	1973 2,065 -8,401 3,253 -2,471 -3,164 639 -195	1972   -1,006   -4,373   917   -369   -1,954   971   -191	Change 3,071 -4,027 2,338 -2,102 -1,210 -332 -4

#### **EXCHANGE RATES** Spot Rate

As of 26 Jul 74			Percent Change from				
France (Franc)	Deutsche Mark) Pound Sterling)	US \$ Per Unit 0.0034 0.3903 0.2137 2.3925 0.0016 1.0245	Dec 66 22.65 55.25 5.84 -14.27 -2.62 11.07	18 Dec 1971 4.22 25.78 8.53 - 8.18 - 9.36 2.68	19 Mar 1973   -11.02   10.22   -3.04   -2.78   -11.92   2.69	19 Jul 1974   -1.57   -0.56   2.00   -0.01   0.19   0.38	

#### OFFICIAL RESERVES

	Latent	Month		Billion US \$			
11.5.10	End of		S Jun 1970	1 Year Earlier	3 Months Earlier		
United States	Jun 74	14.9	14.5	12.9	14.6		
Japan	Jun 74	13.4	4.1	15.2	12.4		
West Germany	May 74	34.4	8.8	31.4	32.0		
France	Jun 74	8.2	4.4	11.6	8.1		
United Kingdom	Jun 74	6.7	2.8	7.0	6.4		
Italy	May74	5.5	4.7	6.2	5.4		
Canada	Jun 74	6.1	4.3	6.0	6.1		

TRADE-WEIGHTE	D EXCHA	NGE	RATES"	**			
As of 28 Jul 74		Percent Change from					
Haira d Brass		Dec 66	18 Dec 1971	19 Mar 1973	19 Jul 1974		
United States Japan West Germany France	ŀ	-15.95 12.16	-6.64	-0.05	0.07		
		30.33 -17.26	13.37	8.35	-1.13		
United Kingdom Italy	1	-34.35	-3.90 -20.17	-6.35 -5.79	2.01 -0.24		
Canada	1	- 25.14 8.01	- 23.82 1.43	-16.91 3.06	-0.14 0.43		

<sup>\*</sup>Seasonally adjusted. \*\*Converted into US dollars at current market rates of exchange.

<sup>31</sup> July 1974

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>Weighting is based on each listed country's trade with 18 other industrialized countries to reflect the competitive impact of exchange-rate variations among the major currencies.